



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

**TODD P. GRAVES**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **THIRD OF FOUR CO-DEFENDANTS SENTENCED TO 30 YEARS FOR ROLE IN METH CONSPIRACY**

**SPRINGFIELD, Mo.** – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a Branson, Mo., man was sentenced in federal court today for his role in a methamphetamine conspiracy.

**Michael R. Burns**, 55, of Branson, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr this afternoon to 30 years in federal prison without parole, plus a \$4,442.76 fine.

On Oct. 30, 2003, **Burns** was convicted by a federal jury of all three counts of a federal indictment charging him with an involvement in the methamphetamine conspiracy. **Burns** was found guilty of conspiracy to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine between April 1998 and July 29, 2002, in Taney County, Mo. He also was found guilty of two counts of distributing 50 grams or more of methamphetamine on June 7 and 25, 2002.

**Burns** is the third co-defendant to be sentenced in this case.

On Dec. 17, 2003, **Sean L. Davis**, 28, Branson, Mo., was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison without parole. On Sept. 15, 2003, **Davis** pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine. By pleading guilty, Graves said, **Davis** admitted that he received supplies of methamphetamine from a co-defendant, which he redistributed to others in southwest Missouri.

On Nov. 10, 2003, **Howard A. Neustel**, 33, of Kirbyville, Mo., was sentenced to four years and nine months in federal prison without parole. On June 4, 2003, **Neustel** pleaded guilty to his role in a conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. By pleading guilty, Graves said, **Neustel** admitted that he received supplies of methamphetamine from a co-defendant, which were redistributed to others in southwest Missouri.

In addition to the co-defendants who have been sentenced, one other also has been convicted by a federal jury for his involvement in this methamphetamine conspiracy and is awaiting his sentencing hearing.

**Alonzo F. Ellerman**, 42, of Hollister, Mo., was convicted by a federal jury on Nov. 5, 2003, and found guilty of two counts of a federal indictment, which alleged his participating in a conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.

**Ellerman** was convicted of conspiracy to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine between as early as April 1998 and continuing until July 29, 2002, in Taney County, Mo. He also was found guilty of being a felon in possession of several firearms. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Ellerman** was found guilty of being in possession of six firearms on Jan. 18, 2002. He has two 1982 criminal felony convictions for assault and burglary.

Each of the defendants were originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Jan. 23, 2003, in Springfield.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Robyn McKee and Randy Eggert and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Kimberly Weber-Dean. The case was investigated by COMET (the Combined Ozarks Multi-jurisdictional Enforcement Team) and the Branson, Mo., Police Department, with assistance from the sheriff's departments of Taney County and Greene County, Mo., and San Bernardino, Calif., the Santa Barbara Drug Task Force and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

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